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Photos: Japan Launches First in New Class of Stealthy Frigates  
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

The Japanese navy has launched its first in a new line of stealthy, advanced frigates that are smaller and cheaper than typical warships. However, the vessels have been criticized as ill-suited for combat.

On Thursday, the Mitsui shipyard in Tamano, Okayama Prefecture, held a ceremony for the launching of the Kumano, the first 30FFM-class frigate, [Tokyo daily The Asahi Shimbun reported](#).

According to the outlet, the ship cost \$443 million to build, or just two-thirds the cost of a larger conventional destroyer. However, while smaller and cheaper, the Kumano is also less-well equipped. It carries defensive RIM-116 Rolling Airframe Missiles and MHI Type 17 anti-ship missiles and has a landing deck for a Seahawk helicopter, but lacks significant offensive capabilities.

In all, the Kumano is just 435 feet long with 3,900 tons of displacement, but 5,500 tons when fully loaded, [according to Defense News](#) - that's half the size of the new Maya-class destroyers. In light of that, it's unlikely the new Kumano will live up to the "nine lives" nickname of a much more famous Kumano, [a Mogami-class heavy cruiser that took part](#) in more naval engagements than any other Japanese ship during World War II. However, the new ship's stealthy, angular design, crafted to minimize its radar signature, means it will be better able to evade threats. It also carries a powerful Mitsubishi Electric OPY-2 multi-function radar and has the ability to deploy unmanned surface and subsurface assets.

According to the Asahi, the ship has a crew of just 90, thanks to extensive automation. That's half the crew needed for a destroyer and one-third that needed for ships equipped with the Aegis combat system. The outlet also notes that a standardized design will enable a rotating set of four crews to operate any of the vessels that need operating, rather than the one ship they're used to.

A smaller crew means smaller personnel demands, which the Maritime Self-Defense Force (MSDF) needs in the face of diminishing recruitment numbers. [A report in the London Times in October noted](#) the MSDF had failed to reach its recruitment quotas for the past several years, even amid an increase in the maximum age limit from 26 to 32 years of age.

Tokyo has ordered up six 30FFM ships, and the Defense Ministry is looking for two more vessels, [according to its August white paper](#), but has eventual needs for a total of 22 frigates. In a strange coincidence, the Kumano was actually the second 30FFM ship laid down; the first remains under construction.

The Kumano is expected to be commissioned in March 2022, at which time it will begin patrols in the East China Sea to monitor the movements of Chinese fishing boats, which have [come](#)



[into increasing conflict with Tokyo in recent years](#) as competition over fertile fishing waters increases.

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Pentagon Releases List of Six Bases Where US Space Force Could Be Headquartered  
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

The US Space Force (USSF) won't be sending service members out into the cosmos anytime soon, but those who join could find themselves at one of half a dozen Earth-based sites picked by the Department of the Air Force to host the new service's headquarters.

On Thursday, the US Air Force (USAF) released a list of six bases where it could potentially place US Space Command, the headquarters of the USSF.

"Self-nominated communities from across twenty-four states were evaluated as potential locations for hosting the headquarters," [the USAF said. However, in the end, it selected six finalists](#): Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico; Patrick AFB in Florida; Offutt AFB in Nebraska; Redstone Arsenal in Alabama; Joint Base San Antonio in Texas; and Peterson AFB in Colorado, from which it is presently run.

The Air Force says the final decision should come in early 2021; however, the move itself [isn't likely until 2026, according to Politico](#).

Each base has something to offer: Kirtland is Air Force Global Strike Command's largest base and home to Air Force Command's Nuclear Weapons Center, and Patrick AFB is already a Space Command base, because it runs the Cape Canaveral rocket launch facility. In fact, Patrick [was due to be renamed Patrick Space Force Base](#) earlier this year, until the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the move.

San Antonio is the Defense Department's single largest facility, housing some 80,000 people, and includes several Air Force training, education and personnel commands. Offutt is the home of US Strategic Command, which managed US space assets between 2002 and 2019, during the period in which Space Command was deactivated. Redstone is home to the US Army's Aviation and Missile Command, the US Missile Defense Agency and NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center.

The list is a little different from that [released by Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson in May 2019](#), at which time the USSF had not even formally been created yet - an event that happened in December of that year. That list included Peterson and Redstone, but also the Colorado air bases at Buckley, Cheyenne Mountain and Schriever, as well as Vandenberg AFB, north of Los Angeles, California.

As the headquarters is sure to bring a ton of high-tech jobs to whichever community hosts it, [politicians have tried to curry favor](#) with the Air Force to encourage it to pick their town's air base. However, [the Department of the Air Force said earlier this year](#) a variety of criteria will come into consideration, including a rating of 50 or higher on the AARP livability index, a spot in



the top 150 metropolitan areas and the ability to provide all the logistical support necessary, including living areas and amenities, for the staff that would be reassigned to the base. For now, [the Space Force has no humans deployed in space](#) and only recently launched its first satellite. However, the Pentagon has had extensive space assets for decades, with their responsibilities split between different service branches.

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Video: Unidentified Shooter of Wisconsin Mall Remains At-Large, At Least 8 Injured  
by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Police responded to a shooting incident reported at the Mayfair Mall in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, on Friday afternoon. Police officials noted eight victims had been transported to area hospitals - seven adults and one teenage child, all of whom arrived at the hospitals alive. [According to CBS Milwaukee](#), police were called to the shopping mall around 3 p.m. People in the building have been ordered to shelter in place. Bus lines stopping at the mall have also been rerouted.

Wauwatosa [Police Chief Barry Weber said at a press conference Friday evening](#) that there were seven adult victims, plus another teenage victim. None had died at the time of the presser, but the police chief had no knowledge of the extent of their injuries.

[Stephanie Sutton, a reporter with the local ABC affiliate](#), noted that an eyewitness has reported between 8 and 12 gunshots fired.

Weber said victims had described the shooter as a white male in his 20s or 30s, but had no other knowledge of his identity so far. They said he had left the site of the shooting but it was unknown whether he remained inside the mall.

Wauwatosa Mayor [Dennis McBride said in a statement](#) that 75 police had responded to the scene. [The FBI's field office in Milwaukee noted](#) on Twitter it was part of the law enforcement tactical response to the incident, as did the Chicago office of the [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives](#). An armored vehicle was also spotted outside the mall.

In February, 17-year-old Alvin Cole was fatally shot at the Mayfair Mall by Wauwatosa police. After prosecutors decided not to bring charges against the officer for the shooting, protests hit the city for several days and [28 people were arrested, according to WISN](#). There was also a shooting in the mall parking lot later in October in which a person reportedly shot themselves non-lethally in the leg in a drug deal gone wrong, [according to the Journal-Sentinel](#).

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Chinese Thinker Fires Back at US Academics, Notes US, Taipei Also Shape Cross-Strait Relations



by [Morgan Artyukhina](#)

Two American think tank fellows who support a close US relationship with Taiwan declined to consider the effect expanding support for the island would have on relations with China in a recent news article, placing sole responsibility for a prospective war on China's shoulders, when in fact all three governments influence the situation.

A leading Chinese academic has pushed back against claims Beijing risks sparking a war with the US over Taiwan, saying that Taipei and Washington are just as responsible for the quality of the trilateral relationship.

On Thursday, two academics from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a hawkish think tank based in Washington, DC, [penned an article in the South China Morning Post \(SCMP\)](#) that cautioned Chinese President Xi Jinping against launching a war to reunite Taiwan with the mainland.

The article explored two scenarios for a potential war between China and the US: one started by China over Taiwan and one started by the US over the South China Sea. Both scenarios involved unprovoked attacks.

"A military confrontation with the US – which is highly likely if China launches a kinetic attack on Taiwan – could damage Xi's position and threaten his plans for China's 'national rejuvenation,'" the academics noted.

As reasons for prior suspicion, they cited some provocative statements in Chinese state-connected media and an increase in incidents along the edge of Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) in which Taipei has scrambled fighters to warn off Chinese aircraft. The ADIZ, of course, isn't Taiwanese territory, and [Sputnik has reported on China's legal right to cross the median line](#) in the Taiwan Strait without being fired upon by Taipei.

US Powerfully Shapes Taiwan Situation

However, much about the situation was also left out of their analysis, and Zhou Bo, an honorary fellow at the Center for China-America Defense Relations at the Academy of Military Science of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, decided to set the record straight.

"The development of cross-strait relations is not solely decided by the Chinese mainland. It is, on the contrary, a result of the interaction between Taipei, Washington and Beijing," [Zhou told the SCMP on Friday](#).

The academics' piece, for example, made no mention of the billions of dollars worth of weaponry Washington has either already sold to Taipei or is presently in the process of approving. The Trump administration has furnished the autonomous island with [F-16V "Viper" fighter jets](#) and advanced torpedoes, and the State Department has approved sale of [RQ-9B Reaper drones](#), long-range cruise missiles, [anti-ship missiles](#), [mobile rocket artillery units](#) and more.

Neither was mention made of several provocative incidents in recent months, such as visits by numerous senior US officials to Taiwan, including [US Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar](#) and US [Undersecretary of State Keith Krach](#), and US [military aircraft flying over the island](#). US Environmental Protection Agency chief [Andrew Wheeler announced on Friday he, too, would visit](#) Taiwan next month.

To Beijing, these are encroachments on Chinese territory, and the Chinese government has lodged strong complaints and warnings about the US continuing to do so.



"China is firmly opposed to any official exchanges between the United States and Taiwan. This position is consistent and clear," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said.

"China will take the necessary response measures appropriate to the situation's development."

The CSIS thinkers' omission was not for want of knowledge: one of the authors, Bonnie S. Glaser, who heads CSIS' China Power Project, [wrote last month that a task force including her and her SCMP co-author](#), Jude Blanchette, advised that Washington should consider taking a more provocative stance on its support for Taiwan.

According to the academics, the US must "undertake a high-level, interagency, comprehensive review of Taiwan's security that includes consideration of whether existing declaratory policy on 'strategic ambiguity' is enough for the purposes of deterrence messaging."

That said, [it's not exactly clear to Taiwanese academics that the US would risk a major war](#) with China over Taiwan even if it did launch an all-out invasion of the island.

Since the US switched its diplomatic recognition of the legitimate Chinese state from Taipei to Beijing in 1979, [it has maintained an informal relationship with the Taiwanese government](#), always walking a thin line between providing it with enough military equipment to fend off a potential Chinese attack but not enough to provoke a strong reaction from Beijing - a position known as "strategic ambiguity."

Tsai's Independence Ambitions Enabled by US

Likewise, the government in Taipei, which calls itself the Republic of China and is all that remains of the republican government formed in 1912 after the last Chinese emperor abdicated the throne, has edged toward independence in recent years. Democratic Progressive Party leader Tsai Ing Wen was re-elected to a second four-year term as Taiwanese president earlier this year, and [her party has never recognized the 1992 consensus](#) by which Taipei and Beijing agreed there is only one China.

Beijing passed an anti-secession law in 2005 that would provide it with legal precedence to use force if Taipei makes a formal declaration of independence - [a consequence Xi has made clear would follow](#).

"Now the US is increasingly edging closer to Taiwan, and [President] Tsai Ing Wen holds a totally different stance to developing ties with Beijing when compared to her predecessor Ma Ying Jeou," Zhou said, noting that Trump administration, which came to power in early 2017, had deeply hurt Beijing-Washington ties, not in the least by encouraging the separatist tendencies of Tsai's party.

"It's not 100% sure that a hot war won't happen between China and the US. This goal [avoiding war] can only be achieved if both countries are working towards it," Zhou added. "However, if the US continues its provocative actions over Chinese islands and shoals and in the meantime harshly criticises Beijing, what attitude can Beijing have?"

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NASA 'Hard-Pressed' to Land Astronauts on Moon in 2024, Cites COVID-19 Delays  
by [Mary F.](#)



Although the Apollo lunar flights ended in 1972, the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has remained greatly invested in returning astronauts to the moon by 2024. The last time a NASA astronaut set foot on the moon was in 1972.

In a [report](#) released earlier this month, NASA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) stated that the agency will be "hard-pressed to land astronauts on the moon by the end of 2024," citing COVID-19 as a factor that has impacted "projects, costs and schedules."

"At the very least, achieving any date close to this ambitious goal — and reaching Mars in the 2030s — will require strong, consistent, sustained leadership from the President, Congress and NASA, as well as stable and timely funding," the report states.

"Without transparent and accurate accounting of cost and schedule commitments, it will be difficult for NASA, Congress and external stakeholders to make informed decisions about future projects and programs," the report adds.

According to the OIG, although NASA has made "significant progress" to advance its human exploration efforts, there are still many unknowns regarding the "total cost, schedule and scope of the agency's lunar ambitions."

The agency is currently in the process of developing the Space Launch System (SLS), a two-stage, heavy-lift rocket that will launch the Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle with crew and cargo into space. SLS production and flight certification are still required, and engine and core stage testing also need to be conducted.

NASA is also in the process of updating spacesuits, developing a robotic lunar rover and using commercial partnerships "to provide end-to-end payload delivery services to the moon."

The agency also hopes to develop the Human Landing System in the next few years to provide crew transportation from the lunar orbit to the moon. NASA will also construct a small spacecraft known as the Lunar Gateway to "orbit the moon and act as a waypoint for crews traveling to the lunar surface or deep space destinations."

In September, NASA [revealed its \\$28 billion plan](#) to land the first woman and the next man on the moon by 2024.

"With bipartisan support from Congress, our 21st century push to the moon is well within America's reach," NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine [said in a statement at the time](#). "As we build up a sustainable presence, we're also building momentum toward those first human steps on the red planet."

Apollo 11 astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon on July 20, 1969, and only 10 more people, all Americans, have touched the moon's surface since. The last time a NASA astronaut went to the moon was in 1972.

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Jupiter, Saturn to Appear as 'Double Planet' Next Month in 'Exceptionally Rare' Event  
by [Mary F.](#)

Jupiter, a gas giant with a mass one-thousandth that of the sun, is the fifth planet from the sun and is the largest in the solar system. Saturn, the sixth planet from the sun, is the second-largest in the solar system with an average radius of about nine times that of Earth. On December 21, Jupiter and Saturn will be close together, or in conjunction, in an extremely rare event, [according to a release from Rice University published by Phys.org](#).

In astronomy, conjunction refers to when two astronomical objects have the same right ascension or are on the same ecliptic longitude. Right ascension is defined as the angular distance of a point measured eastward along the celestial equator from the sun.

According to [Space.com](#), when Jupiter and Saturn are in conjunction, it's typically referred to as a "Great Conjunction" because the two gas giants don't frequently have close encounters.

Just after sunset on December 21, the two planets will only be 0.1 degrees apart. This conjunction will be the first by the planets since the year 2000. However, to see an extremely close alignment, like the one that will take place in December, one would have to go back to 1226, according to the Rice University release. The next time Jupiter and Saturn will be this close together in the sky will be on March 15, 2080.

"Alignments between these two planets are rather rare, occurring once every 20 years or so, but this conjunction is exceptionally rare because of how close the planets will appear to one another," Rice University astronomer Patrick Hartigan said in the release. "You'd have to go all the way back to just before dawn on March 4, 1226, to see a closer alignment between these objects visible in the night sky."

Throughout the summer, Jupiter and Saturn have been slowly approaching one another. Between December 16 and December 25, the two planets will be separated in the night sky by less than a full moon's diameter.

"On the evening of closest approach on December 21 they will look like a double planet, separated by only 1/5th the diameter of the full moon," said Hartigan, who is also a professor of physics and astronomy. "For most telescope viewers, each planet and several of their largest moons will be visible in the same field of view that evening."

Although the conjunction will be most visible near the equator, the rare event will be visible in the western sky anywhere on Earth and will be best viewed during twilight.

"The further north a viewer is, the less time they'll have to catch a glimpse of the conjunction before the planets sink below the horizon," Hartigan explained.

"By the time skies are fully dark in Houston, for example, the conjunction will be just 9 degrees above the horizon," Hartigan added. "Viewing that would be manageable if the weather cooperates and you have an unobstructed view to the southwest."

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New York Governor Andrew Cuomo Will Receive Emmy for COVID-19 TV Briefings  
by [Mary F.](#)



New York Governor Andrew Cuomo has been serving as the 56th governor of New York since 2011. He has also served as chair of the National Governors Association since August 2020. His father, Mario Cuomo, served as New York governor for three terms.

Cuomo, whose response to the COVID-19 outbreak in New York has been praised by many, will be receiving an international Emmy for his use of television during the outbreak.

In a [Friday statement](#), the International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, the organization behind the International Emmy Awards, praised Cuomo for his "masterful use of television to inform and calm people around the world" during the crisis.

"The Governor's 111 daily briefings worked so well because he effectively created television shows, with characters, plot lines, and stories of success and failure," Bruce L. Paisner, the organization's president and CEO, said in the statement. "People around the world tuned in to find out what was going on, and New York tough became a symbol of the determination to fight back."

The award is presented to an individual or organization who "crosses cultural boundaries to touch our common humanity," the statement noted. Past recipients include former US Vice President Al Gore, US talk show host Oprah Winfrey and US film director and producer Steven Spielberg.

"It's flattering – I accepted on behalf of the people of the state, and I think it's flattering to the people of the state," Cuomo said of the award on Friday during a press call, [The Hill reported](#). "I think what the people of New York did was amazing, going from the highest infection rate to one of the lowest. I think their participation in the daily press presentations was amazing – we had over 64 million people participate."

Cuomo will be presented the award on November 23 during a virtual Emmy Awards ceremony. During the briefing, Cuomo also divulged that he has already created a video to play during the ceremony, noting, "I thanked the academy — which I got a real kick out of."

Many health experts have credited New York for managing to control the pandemic. While the state had one of the worst outbreaks in the US in March, Cuomo swiftly took steps to control the outbreak and [flatten the curve](#) by locking down the state and imposing strict social distancing guidelines. However, despite Cuomo's actions, the pandemic has still resulted in the deaths of more than 34,000 people in New York, according to the [latest data by Worldometer](#).

In addition, Cuomo has faced scrutiny for publishing a book titled "American Crisis: Leadership Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic" in October, according to [Fox News](#). According to [Penguin Random House](#), the book describes "intimate and inspiring thoughts of a leader at an unprecedented historical moment."

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Photos: Medieval Soldier's Remains, Weapons Discovered Underneath Lithuanian Lake  
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)



Although human burials with connections to warfare have been previously unearthed across the Baltic states, this is the first instance in which the remains of a medieval soldier have been discovered underwater in Lithuania, according to researchers.

Archaeologists recently confirmed the discovery of a medieval soldier's remains and weaponry on the floor of Lithuania's Lake Asveja during an underwater inspection of a wooden bridge undergoing repairs.

Elena Pranckėnaitė, a researcher with Lithuania's Klaipėda University, [told the Baltic News Service](#) that the findings were located some 30 feet below the lake's surface under a layer of sand and were discovered when divers were inspecting the Dubingiai bridge's support system, which is in the process of being replaced with metal supports.

In a [statement to Live Science](#), Pranckėnaitė revealed that preliminary examinations at Vilnius University have indicated the remains were those of a man who died during the 16th century. With the additional discovery of an iron sword, leather belt and boots with spurs and two knives with wooden handles, analysts concluded that the individual held a military status.

It is not believed that the individual was purposely buried in the area, but that the soldier's body was instead covered by silt deposited onto the remains over the years. It's unclear what caused the individual's death.

"For now, we assume that those discovered human remains could be linked with the former bridge leading to Dubingiai castle, which was situated on the hilltop on the shore of Asveja Lake," Pranckėnaitė said, explaining that a survey conducted in 1998 previously revealed that an older bridge dating back to the 16th or 17th century once stood in the area.

A team of researchers with the National Museum of Lithuania are expected to continue their analysis of the findings. Pranckėnaitė told Live Science that the team hopes to "tell the [soldier's] story" within a year at the earliest.

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US Health Expert Fauci Says Time to 'Get Rid of These Ridiculous Conspiracy Theories' About COVID-19

by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

Dr. Anthony Fauci is the director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and also serves as a member of the White House coronavirus task force. Prior to his involvement in the task force, Fauci was widely known for his efforts in the US government's response to the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Participating in a [USA Today Editorial Board meeting](#) on Wednesday, Fauci voiced his frustrations with the volume of individuals denying the seriousness of COVID-19 and urged Americans to wake up to the realities created by the pandemic.

"There are obviously going to be some differences, because we have such a large, diverse country. But the differences shouldn't be fundamental," Fauci said. "There should be really some common denominators that everyone follows. We've got to say, 'OK, folks, enough is enough



with this political divisiveness, with this claiming that people are making things up. Get rid of these ridiculous conspiracy theories and realize this is a public health crisis.”

As [reported by NPR](#), some conspiracies regarding the pandemic include that the virus is just another common cold, that it was created in a lab or, according to one Montana resident, that COVID-19 is just “communist Marxism that they’re trying to push on this country.”

Fauci stressed that “we don’t want to shut down as a nation because of the psychological and economic consequences of that. But we at least have got to be consistent in doing some fundamental things.” He added that the US is still in a “vulnerable position.”

The [latest figures by Johns Hopkins University](#) state that the US has confirmed over 11.8 million COVID-19 cases and has recorded over 253,000 related deaths. A [recent update](#) by the university indicates the US reported a daily death toll of over 2,000 on Thursday - the first time it has surpassed the figure since May.

At present, the states experiencing surges include Illinois, Texas, California, Florida and Michigan. When compared against other nations working to curb the spread of COVID-19, the US still tops the globe in reported cases, with India following close behind with over 9 million cases.

“The data speak for themselves,” Fauci noted. “When you look at the map, where the colors that get darker and redder show that there’s increased activity, it’s almost the entire country. Things are going in the wrong direction in an arena of increased risk, namely the cooler and colder weather. I mean, let’s go, folks. What about that don’t you understand?”

With the holiday season on the verge of kicking into high gear, officials have grown increasingly concerned that cases may skyrocket over the next few months. In fact, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [issued new guidance on Thursday](#) urging Americans to reconsider traveling ahead of Thanksgiving, warning that over 1 million cases were reported in the week prior.

And yet, despite the warnings, officials anticipate the advisory will be largely ignored, especially as many continue to hold large gatherings and ignore social-distancing and masking measures. Recently it was reported that an [Ohio wedding became a superspreader event](#) after one-third of the invited guests, including the newlyweds, contracted COVID-19. Elsewhere, in Washington state, a wedding involving over 300 people was [linked to some 40 COVID-19 cases](#).

In some circumstances, people have grown weary of the virus-prevention measures and become skeptical, instead likening COVID-19 to the seasonal flu, as US President Donald Trump did in the early days of the pandemic and reiterated after [contracting the respiratory disease](#) himself. Trump later [explained to Washington Post](#) associate editor Bob Woodward that he “always wanted to play [COVID-19] down” in an effort to not cause public alarm.

Fauci told participants of the editorial meeting that one of the bigger frustrations that “borders on pain” is that “either people don’t want to look at the data, or they look at the data and they say it’s fake.”

“No, it isn’t fake. ... This is a global issue. I tell the people who deny or think that this is nothing, do you mean that every single country in Europe is doing the same thing, is making things up? They’re not. I mean, it’s so obvious,” he said.

Fauci stated that in order to combat the misinformation and skepticism surrounding COVID-19, the US needs to implement a “consistency of message” and try to understand the “divide” on the matter.



At the moment, the US has several COVID-19 vaccine trials ongoing, with candidates from pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and Moderna becoming the most promising after [reporting over 90% efficacy](#) in preventing the spread of the virus. The first registered vaccine was Russia's Sputnik V, which researchers have [indicated is 92% effective](#).

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FBI Agents Arrest US Man for Allegedly Crashing His Drone Into Police Helicopter  
by [Gaby Arancibia](#)

The case against the California resident is believed to be the first US criminal case in which an individual has been arrested and charged with unsafely operating a drone, according to the US Attorney's Office for the Central District of California.

Andrew Rene Hernandez, a 22-year-old man from Hollywood, California, was arrested Thursday after authorities alleged that he had "recklessly" operated a drone that wound up crashing into a helicopter belonging to the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD).

A [release issued on the arrest](#) explains that the incident unfolded on September 18 when air support was called in to assist with a burglary call made at a Hollywood pharmacy. Although the commercial drone was spotted by officials, measures taken by the helicopter's pilot to evade the unmanned aerial vehicle were unsuccessful, and the pair collided.

As the drone was immediately sent crashing to the ground, officials were forced to make an emergency landing after the helicopter suffered damages to its nose, antenna and bottom cowlings. "If the drone had struck the helicopter's main rotor instead of the fuselage, it could have brought the helicopter down," states a criminal complaint filed on Wednesday.

Additional investigation into the crash led to the discovery of the drone's camera and SD card, which in turn revealed that Hernandez was the operator of the drone. After investigators tracked down Hernandez and carried out a home search in October, the local resident revealed that he decided to fly the drone simply because he wanted to "see what was going on" with the officers. An ongoing probe into the collision is being headed by the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force and the LAPD. The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which has [implemented strict rules](#) regarding the recreational use of commercial drones, is assisting in the investigation.

Although it's unclear how much exact time Hernandez may spend behind bars, the release does state that the misdemeanor offense carries a maximum sentence of one year in prison. The charge of unsafe drone operation was added to the [US criminal code in 2018](#).

Incidentally, Hernandez's arrest was carried out during the FAA-sponsored [National Drone Safety Awareness Week](#).

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California Governor Imposes Limited Curfew to Curb COVID-19 Spread Ahead of Thanksgiving  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

Several California police departments have made it clear they will not enforce the Democratic state governor's limited stay-at-home order or penalize residents who may defy the monthlong COVID-19 mitigation effort.

California Governor Gavin Newsom [announced Thursday](#) that, beginning Saturday, "non-essential work, movement and gatherings" would be restricted between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. local time in "Purple Tier" counties - the state label provided to areas where the contagious disease is widespread, amounting to more than seven new positive COVID-19 cases a day per 100,000 residents.

The curfew will last for one month for the impacted counties, extending through December 21. However, the governor has reserved the right to issue an extension to the order.

Some 37 million Californians live in "Purple Tier" counties, [according to the Los Angeles Times](#). "The virus is spreading at a pace we haven't seen since the start of this pandemic, and the next several days and weeks will be critical to stop the surge. We are sounding the alarm," Newsom said on November 19.

"It is crucial that we act to decrease transmission and slow hospitalizations before the death count surges. We've done it before, and we must do it again."

Fresno Sheriff Margaret Mims has already declared that her department will not be penalizing locals who defy Newsom's order.

"We've got a lot of things to do, including taking guns away from gang members, stopping narcotic trafficking and saving children from internet predators," Mims stated during a video briefing Thursday afternoon, [as reported by Fox 26](#).

Mims noted that she has not observed data showing "things happen that cause a big spread of COVID" between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. local time.

Police leadership from California's Kings County and Mercer County also communicated to Fox 26 that they would not be enforcing the curfew.

"We're not going to enforce any of those orders," said Commander David Dodd of the Kings County Sheriff's Department. "The Kings County Board of Supervisors has asked us to take an educational approach. We're going to refer people to the written guidelines to prevent the spread."

The Golden State has reported an average of 10,000 new COVID-19 cases per day in the last week, the LA Times reported. As of Wednesday, around 4,300 individuals were hospitalized in California in connection with the contagious disease.

According to [data from Johns Hopkins University](#), the US has recorded more than 253,000 COVID-19-related deaths and logged over 11,808,698 positive cases of the novel coronavirus.

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City of Detroit Files Motion Requesting US Judge Sanction Trump Campaign Over  
'Disinformation'  
by [Evan Craighead](#)

The reelection campaign of US President Donald Trump recently dropped its lawsuit regarding vote certification in Detroit, Michigan, and the greater Wayne County, but the facts presented in that withdrawal were deliberately "false" and "misleading" to the American public, according to the city of Detroit.

Attorneys for the Motor City [filed a motion on Thursday](#) in the US District Court for the Western District of Michigan, chiding a [same-day, earlier filing](#) by Mark F. "Thor" Hearne II, which erroneously claimed Wayne County Board of Canvassers "declined to certify the results of the presidential election."

Though Republican members of the Board of Canvassers initially refused to certify the results, they ultimately reversed their decision following virtual outcry from constituents.

The city claimed the Trump campaign provided the court with "impertinent and false language" to make a "gratuitous, public statement about their purported reason for voluntary dismissal, before the Court could reject their baseless claims of election fraud."

Attorneys for Detroit wrote that federal law allows the Trump campaign's legal team to "voluntarily dismiss their claims, but it does not allow them to use a Notice of Dismissal to spread disinformation."

The city of Detroit emphasized that US District Judge Janet Neff possessed "the authority to strike materials from the record as a sanction."

The contested claims filed by the reelection campaign on Thursday echo [Trump's claims that the Republican board members](#) were "threatened, screamed at and viciously harassed" until they were "FORCED to change their vote."

Trump's comment was flagged by Twitter and slapped with an advisory detailing, "This claim about election fraud is disputed."

The two board members did attempt to rescind their certification, but the move was merely symbolic.

Michigan Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey and Michigan House Speaker Lee Chatfield - legislative chamber leaders for the Michigan GOP - met with the US president at the White House on Friday.

The details of the meeting remain unknown. However, Trump abruptly summoned the lawmakers on Thursday, the same day he took to Twitter and highlighted voter entry data that logged Democratic challenger Joe Biden receiving 134,886 votes out of a group received in the early hours of November 4, amounting to 96% of the votes for that "dump."

"Numerous courts, election officials from both parties, and even officials within Trump's own administration, have all reaffirmed that claims of widespread voter fraud are categorically false," stated Biden campaign spokesman Michael Gwin, [CNBC reported](#).

While the Michigan lawsuit was dropped by the Trump campaign, the US president's decision to meet with Shirkey and Chatfield signals [more is to come regarding the state's 2020 election votes](#).

The Wayne County board is scheduled to meet on November 23 to issue its final certification.



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Server Fired After Posting Viral Video of Maskless Nebraska Governor During Election Day Party  
by [Victoria Teets](#)

The server who recorded the now-viral video of GOP Nebraska Governor Pete Ricketts posing for a photo while not wearing a mask at a public restaurant has been fired.

The video, recorded and shared on social media by 25-year-old single parent Karina Montanez, went viral this week, as it shows Ricketts dining with a group of maskless patrons on Election Day. The footage has fostered a feeding frenzy for those angry with Ricketts' refusal to issue a mask mandate in the state he governs as COVID-19 cases and deaths in the state are surging alongside the rest of the country.

Social media users shamed the governor for refusing to impose a statewide mask mandate as Nebraska is seeing a major surge in COVID-19 cases.

Montanez saw repercussions as well, after she was fired from her job on Tuesday, reportedly for violating the company's social media and cellphone policy, according to the owner. [The Washington Post](#) reported that the single mom was fired from jobs at an Omaha-based sports bar and a restaurant called DJ's Dugout after posting videos of Ricketts.

"Hey, Pete, where's your mask? Where's your mask, Pete?" Montanez said in a Snapchat video she later tweeted.

"What are you doing, Pete? We're in a pandemic, Pete," she narrated in the video as she recorded Ricketts from across the room.

Montanez told the Post that she felt that there was no other choice but to record Ricketts when she saw him remove his mask, blatantly disregarding social distancing rules earlier this month. "It was a slap in the face," stated Montanez, adding, "You're supposed to be taking care of us and you're out here acting like a celebrity, while people are fighting for their lives and are in hospitals dying right now."

The governor has maintained that a mask mandate is inappropriate for the state of Nebraska and would "breed resistance," although he has urged people to voluntarily wear face coverings. A spokesman for Ricketts's office told a local [Fox affiliate, KPTM](#), that the state does not require people to wear masks when seated in bars or restaurants, asserting that the governor only took off his mask for photos and while eating.

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US Schedules Three More Executions of Federal Inmates - Justice Department



WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - The US federal government has scheduled three more executions of federal inmates convicted of murder, the Justice Department said in a press release.

"Attorney General William P. Barr today directed the Federal Bureau of Prisons to schedule the executions of three federal-death row inmates sentenced to death for staggeringly brutal murders, including the murder of a child and, with respect to two inmates, the murder of multiple victims," the release said on Friday.

The three inmates will bring the total number of federal executions since they resumed in July to 11. Federal executions had been prohibited in the United States for 17 years.

On Thursday, Orland Hall, who was convicted for kidnapping and murder of a 16-year-old girl in 1994, was the eighth federal inmate to be executed by the federal government.

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**IMF Says Started to Shape Framework of Support Program in Talks With Argentine Authorities**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) – The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said its delegation had started to discuss the framework of the future support program with the Argentine authorities.

The IMF delegation visited the Latin American nation from November 10-20.

"The IMF staff team and Argentine authorities started delineating the contours of an IMF-supported program that could back the government's plans to address the country's deep economic and social challenges, which have been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic," the fund said on late Friday in a statement.

The organization also welcomed Argentina's intention to request an Extended Fund Facility arrangement.

"Good progress has been made in defining the initial elements of such a program, and further discussions are expected to continue virtually between the teams over the coming weeks," the statement added.

The Argentine economy is not at its best currently, particularly in light of the coronavirus-related shocks. For the first nine months of the year alone, inflation gained 22.3 percent. Argentina's GDP dropped 19.1 percent in the second quarter of 2020 year-on-year. The share of Argentine citizens beyond the poverty line has increased to 40.9 percent — or 11.7 million people — in the first half a year. This includes around 3 million people living in extreme poverty.

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**Wisconsin Police Say 8 People Injured in Mall Shooting, Suspect Still at Large**



WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - Eight people have been injured in a shooting at a mall in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, and the gunman is still at large, the Wauwatosa Police Department said in a press release.

"Wauwatosa Police Dispatch received calls reporting a shooting incident at Mayfair Mall...When emergency personnel arrived, the shooter was no longer on the scene," the release said on Friday. "Seven injured adults and one injured teenager were transported to the hospital by Wauwatosa Fire."

The release said the extent of the victims' injuries is unknown at this time.

Witnesses have described the suspect as a white man between 20 to 39 years old, the release said.

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**Donald Trump Jr. Tested Positive for Coronavirus Earlier This Week - Spokesperson**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump's oldest son Donald Trump Jr. has tested positive for the novel coronavirus earlier this week and is self-quarantining at his cabin, his spokesperson said in a statement.

"Don tested positive at the start of the week and has been quarantining out at his cabin since the result. He's been completely asymptomatic so far and is following all medically recommended COVID-19 guidelines," the spokesperson said on Friday as quoted by NBC News.

On October 2, the US president was hospitalized at the Walter Reed Medical Center not long after announcing that he and the First Lady Melania Trump tested positive for the coronavirus. The US president's youngest son Barron had also contracted the coronavirus but exhibited no symptoms.

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**US State of Georgia Governor Certifies Election Results Despite 'Significant' Errors**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - Georgia Governor Brian Kemp said he certified the state's presidential election results despite the recount process revealing irregularities in several counties.

Earlier, Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger's office said the results of the 2020 presidential election have been certified after a hand recount. Democratic nominee Joe Biden



won by just over 12,500 votes, or 0.26 percent of the ballots cast, according to the results released.

"The Secretary of State oversaw a complete audit, which revealed significant errors made in several counties," Kemp said in a press conference on Friday.

In an interview shortly before certifying the electors, Kemp explained why he do so despite complaints by Trump over vote fraud.

"I would just say I'm formalizing the certification... law requires us to formalize the certification that the Secretary of State delivered earlier today. I'm legally bound to take this step," Kemp told the Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

During the presser, Kemp said Floyd, Fayette, and Walton counties, which went Trump's way, and Douglas County, won by Biden, were jurisdictions where abnormalities occurred. The Republican governor found the discovery of uncounted ballots unfathomable, adding that such findings are unacceptable and that Georgians have flooded his office with calls to get to the bottom of things.

By state law, because the margin was so close, President Donald Trump has 48 hours to request another recount.

Biden, projected by every major US media outlet as the winner, has, overall, won 79.7 million votes (51.1%) to Trump's 73.7 million (47.2%), according to official results posted by Fox News on Friday. However, Americans do not elect their president based on national popular vote, but via a format called the Electoral College which apportions 538 electoral votes across every state. Biden has been projected to capture 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232. Trump, who has refused to concede, has filed lawsuits in multiple states to block certification, alleging vote fraud.

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#### **Multiple People Injured in Wisconsin Mall Shooting - Reports**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - Multiple people have been injured in a shooting at Mayfair Mall in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported citing emergency radio traffic.

The media outlet said Friday witnesses reported hearing gunshots and stores responding to an active-shooter situation.

Local media on the scene said three ambulances have taken people to the hospital.

A flyer circulating on social media shows that a Make America Great Again (MAGA) rally featuring Sheriff David Clarke, was schedule to take place at Mayfair Mall on Saturday.

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#### Trump to Take Part in 'Virtual' G20 Summit This Weekend - Reports

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump will take part in an online virtual summit of Group of 20 (G20) leaders to take place over this weekend, CNN reported. Trump will take part in the G20 summit hosted by Saudi Arabia, the report said, citing an unnamed administration official.

According to the report, it has not yet been announced which of the online sessions Trump has decided to personally participate in, but he will once again represent the United States at it, the report said.

According to the Kremlin, Russian President Vladimir Putin at the G20 summit will prioritize the fight against the novel coronavirus and the efforts to minimize the economic consequences from the coronavirus pandemic.

Among other key topics on the G20 summit's agenda are climate change, support to Africa, trade, energy and the fight against the corruption.

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#### US State of Georgia Certifies Biden's Victory - Secretary of State

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) – The US state of Georgia certified the results of the presidential election upholding Democratic nominee Joe Biden's win, the Georgia Secretary of State's Office said in a statement.

"The Georgia Secretary of State's Office today certified the results for the November 3, 2020 General Election," the statement said on Friday. "In certifying the results, the Secretary of State affirmed that all 159 counties have provided to the state the total votes tabulated for each state and federal candidate."

Joe Biden received 2,474,507 votes defeating sitting US President Donald Trump, who won 2,461,837 ballots votes.



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**Pfizer Requests US Emergency Approval of COVID-19 Vaccine - Statement**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - The pharmaceutical giant Pfizer has filed a request to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for an emergency use authorization for the COVID-19 vaccine it developed in cooperation with German laboratory BioNTech, the company said in a statement.

"Pfizer and BioNTech\_Group have submitted an EUA (Emergency Use Authorization) request to US FDA for our COVID-19 vaccine candidate," the company said on Friday.

Earlier in the day, Pfizer and BioNTech announced in an earlier press release that they would submit the request for the emergency use of their mRNA vaccine candidate, BNT162b2 against SARS-CoV-2.

"FDA approval would potentially enable use of the vaccine in high-risk populations in the United States by the middle to end of December 2020," Pfizer said.

On Wednesday, Pfizer announced that the final analysis of the phase III clinical trials of the vaccine showed its 95 percent efficiency.

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**SPUTNIK TOP STORIES OF THE DAY**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik)

**HOSTAGES INCIDENT IN GEORGIA**

\* The Georgian Interior Ministry confirmed on Friday that a police operation is underway in the capital Tbilisi where an armed man entered an office of a microfinance organization and reportedly took nine hostages.

\* The Georgian police detained an attacker in Tbilisi and freed all nine hostages, Police Chief Vazha Siradze told reporters.

**NAGORNO-KARABAKH CEASEFIRE**

\* More than 1,900 refugees returned to Nagorno-Karabakh from Armenia on Friday, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

\* Those trying to slow down the implementation of the trilateral agreement between Moscow, Yerevan and Baku on Nagorno-Karabakh must understand that the alternative to this document is war, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

\* Humanitarian efforts will help to reach a political settlement in Karabakh, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

\* The territory of Nagorno-Karabakh is fully controlled by Russian peacekeepers, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said.

#### US POST-ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS

\* The US state of Georgia has certified that presumptive President-elect Joe Biden was the official winner in the 2020 presidential election, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger's office announced on Friday.

\* White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany told reporters President Donald Trump did not give orders banning engagement with projected President-elect Joe Biden's transition team.

#### APEC SUMMIT

\* The leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) member states stress their support for the international trade rules and the importance of transparent trade environment during pandemic, according to a joint declaration issued Friday, following the APEC summit.

\* APEC countries should consider establishing coordination in the field of protecting personal information at the international level and combating cybercrime, Russian President Vladimir Putin said.

\* Russia has accumulated solid clinical and scientific experience in the fight against the novel coronavirus and is ready to share it with all APEC partners, Putin said.

\* A consensus has been achieved on the final declaration of the summit of APEC member states' leaders, which is a historic occasion, Malaysia's Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said.

#### STATE OF RUSSIAN ECONOMY

\* Russia's economy is estimated to shrink by 3.9 percent year-on-year in 2020, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday.

\* The decline in Russia's GDP in January-September 2020 amounted to 3.5 percent in annualized terms, according to a preliminary estimate from Rosstat.



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#### **Trump Says He Won Election Despite Negative Ads From Big Pharma, Media Opposition**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump on Friday said he won the presidential election despite negative ad attacks by the pharmaceutical industry and media opposition.

Every major US media outlet has already projected Joe Biden as the winner of the November 13 election. However, Trump, who has refused to concede, has tried to file legal challenges to prevent final vote certification in several battleground states Biden narrowly won.

"Big Pharma ran millions of dollars of negative advertisements against me during the campaign - which I won by the way - but, you know, we'll find that out," Trump said at a presser. "Almost 74 million votes. We had Big Pharma against us. We had the media against us. We had big tech against us. We had a lot of dishonesty against us."

Trump made his comments during an announcement to lower prescription drug costs in United States.

Biden, so far, has won nearly 6 million more votes than Trump - an edge of nearly 4% - as counting continues in some states. Overall, Biden won 79.7 million votes (51.1%) to Trump's 73.7 million (47.2%), according to official results posted by Fox News on Friday. However, Americans do not elect their president based on national popular vote, but via a format called the Electoral College which apportions 538 electoral votes across every state. Biden has been projected to capture 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232.

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#### **Trump Says to Issue 2 Rules to Lower Prescription Drugs in US**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump in a press conference on Friday announced his administration is finalizing two measures to lower prescription drug prices in the United States.

"My administration is issuing two ground-breaking rules to very dramatically lower the price of prescription drugs for the American people, especially for our cherished seniors," Trump said. Moreover, Trump said his administration hopes to have the "Most Favored Nation" rule ready to be implemented by January 1, which would create a program to prevent Medicare from paying more money for a drug than the lowest price in countries in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Trump did not take questions after the press conference.

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**UPDATE - Georgia to Officially Certify Narrow Biden Election Win Later on Friday - State Secretary**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger will officially certify the presidential election results later on Friday afternoon, his office said in a correction to a previous release on Friday.

"In certifying the results, the Secretary of State will affirm that all 159 counties have provided to the state the total votes tabulated for each state candidate," the release said. "Further, the Secretary of State will affirm that the statewide consolidated returns for state and federal offices are a true and correct tabulation of the certified returns received by this office from each county."

According to the figures released by Raffensperger's office on Thursday, Democratic nominee Joe Biden won by a narrow margin of slightly more than 12,000 ballots, or 0.25 percent of the ballots cast. Biden won 2,474,470 votes or 49.50 percent and President Donald Trump won 2,461,833 votes or 49.25 percent.

By law, Raffensperger must officially certify the results by 5:00 p.m. local time on Friday afternoon, giving Governor Brian Kemp a 24-hour period to confirm the certification of the 16-member Electoral College representing the state.

Trump's campaign has 48 hours to call for a recount since Biden's margin of victory was less than 0.5 percent.

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**Pentagon Imposes New COVID-19 Restrictions to Contain Outbreak - Reports**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - The US Defense Department will impose new COVID-19 related restrictions at the Pentagon as an effort to contain an outbreak among senior officials, Politico reported on Friday citing an official.

The new restriction will go into effect on Thursday, requiring the building to go down from 80 to 60 percent maximum occupancy, the report said.

The report noted, however, that the Pentagon has not reached 50 percent capacity since the outbreak of the disease early this year. Temperature checks on workers entering the Pentagon will be doubled, the report added.

Pentagon employees will be encouraged to work from home and to use sick leave as much as possible, the report said.



On Thursday, the Defense Department said it is testing staff members who that were in close contact with the Lithuanian delegation headed by Defense Minister Raimundas Karoblis, who had tested positive for COVID-19 after visiting the Pentagon earlier this week.

Acting undersecretary of defense for policy Anthony Tata also tested positive for COVID-19 after a meeting with Karoblis on November 13

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**Georgia to Officially Certify Narrow Biden Election Win Later on Friday - State Secretary**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - The US state of Georgia will announce certifying the presidential election recount results later on Friday afternoon, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger told a press conference in Atlanta.

"As secretary of state, I believe that the numbers that we have presented today are correct," Raffensperger said on Friday. "The numbers reflect the verdict of the people, not a decision by the Secretary of State's Office or of courts or of either campaign."

According to the figures released by Raffensperger's office on Thursday, Democratic nominee Joe Biden won by a very narrow margin of slightly more than 12,000 ballots, or 0.25 percent of the ballots cast. Biden won 2,474,470 votes or 49.50 percent and President Donald Trump won 2,461,833 votes or 49.25 percent.

According to Georgia law, Raffensperger must officially certify the results by 5:00 p.m. local time on Friday afternoon, giving Governor Brian Kemp a 24-hour period to confirm the certification of the 16-member Electoral College representing the state.

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**White House Denies Trump Ordered Officials Not to Engage With Biden Team**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany told reporters on Friday President Donald Trump did not give orders banning engagement with projected President-elect Joe Biden's transition team.

Trump, who has refused to concede, has filed legal challenges in several states trying to block certification of votes that show Biden winning the November 3 election. The US General Services Administration (GSA), a federal agency headed by a Trump appointee, has yet to recognize Biden as the winner, an ascertainment required to unlock funding and resources for the transition process.

"No," McEnany said when asked if the president gave anyone instructions not to engage with Biden's transition team. "I've certainly never been instructed that, I've never heard of an instruction to that end."

Last week, The Washington Post, citing unnamed officials, said the White House ordered all government agencies not to engage with Biden's team. On Thursday, US Senator Chris Murphy said the Trump Administration's vaccine distribution team confirmed they have no plans to brief Biden. The former vice president has said that Trump's refusal to cooperate will cost lives and has threatened legal action.

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#### **Biden Transition Team Unable to Receive Critically Important Classified Briefings - Aide**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - The transition team of projected President-elect Joe Biden is not able to get vital classified briefings, senior transition aide Yohannes Abraham told reporters on Friday.

"This week, the President-elect and Vice President-elect were briefed by former national security officials about the readiness of the diplomatic defense and intelligence agencies," Abraham said. "And as you know, they are still not able to receive the critically important classified briefings that should be available to them."

Abraham also said that the Biden transition team continues to do the work they are able to do, including continued rollout of senior White House officials.

Earlier on Friday, White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany told reporters that she did not know about any instructions given to the Trump administration not to engage with the Biden transition team.

Most major US news networks have projected Joe Biden to be the winner of the 2020 presidential election.

Trump has said he has won the election but the victory was stolen from him via massive election fraud and acts of impropriety. Trump has initiated audits and recounts in several states and has filed a number of lawsuits. Some states have said they did not find evidence of substantial election fraud.

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#### **US, Indonesia Defense Chiefs Discuss Modernization Cooperation Policies - Pentagon**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - The top defense officials of the United States and Indonesia discussed over the telephone the US government's support for Indonesia's defense modernization programs, the Department of Defense announced in a readout on Friday.



"Today, Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller spoke on the phone with Indonesian Minister of Defense Prabowo Subianto to discuss bilateral defense priorities," the readout said. "[They] discussed US defense procurements that would support Indonesia's defense modernization."

The Defense Department said both officials shared their desire to enhance defense engagement between Indonesia and the United States and noted the importance of bilateral military exchanges.

Miller and Subianto also committed to strengthening the education and training opportunities between the two countries, the readout added.

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**Trump Will Not Advocate His Re-Election in Meeting With Michigan Lawmakers - White House**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump will not advocate for his re-election during the upcoming meeting with Michigan lawmakers, White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said in a press conference on Friday.

Trump will host Michigan's Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey and House Speaker Lee Chatfield at the White House later on Friday.

"This is not an advocacy meeting, there will be no one from the campaign there, he routinely meets with lawmakers from all across the country," McEnany said when asked if Trump will ask the Michigan lawmakers to have the Republican-majority state legislators to appoint a pro-Trump slate of electors.

Earlier this week, two Republican member of the Board of Canvassers in Michigan tried to rescind their certification of the election results. Michigan Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson has said a post-election audit will be conducted after final certification of the winner according to ballots cast and counted.

Most media networks have projected Democratic nominee Joe Biden to be the winner of the 2020 presidential election. However, Trump said he won in a landslide and his victory was stolen via massive election fraud and acts of impropriety.

Trump has subsequently pursued recounts in several states and has filed lawsuits to seek redress. Some states have said they found no evidence of substantial election fraud.

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**Democratic Congressional Leaders to Discuss COVID-19 With Biden, Harris on Friday - Pelosi**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - Presumptive President-Elect Joe Biden will meet with the Democratic leaders in the Senate and the House in Wilmington, Delaware on Friday

afternoon to discuss legislation on the COVID-19 crisis and on agreeing on funding for the federal government, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said earlier in the day.

"Later today [Senate Minority Leader] Chuck Schumer and I will be visiting President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris," Pelosi told a Capitol Hill press conference. "We will be discussing the lame duck session [of Congress], the urgency of crushing the virus... easing the pain of the crisis and keeping government open."

Pelosi said she expected full agreement with Biden on trying to advance key pieces of legislation to implement his economic and health crises programs as soon as possible.

"We are pleased that the omnibus bill Moving America Forward legislation that we passed in the summer is so compatible with Joe Biden in creating good-paying jobs in infrastructure, manufacturing, workforce development and clean energy - the list goes on and on," she said.

Pelosi said she and Schumer would also discuss with Biden and Harris passing long-overdue funding for state and local governments to allow them to pay and rehire teachers, nurses, first responders, sanitation workers and other key staff to respond to the pandemic.

"We need to get the food issue into the legislation now," Pelosi said. "Seventeen million children in the United State are now food insecure."

So far Pelosi and Schumer have failed to reach any agreement with Republican congressional leaders Mitch McConnell in the Senate and Kevin McCarthy in the House to push through a new pandemic relief package and related proposals in the lame-duck session of the outgoing Congress.

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**Trump Must Work With Biden to Ensure Smooth Transition If Needed - Republican Senator**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - The Trump administration needs to cooperate with the staff of presumptive President-elect Joe Biden to ensure a smooth transition if Biden is confirmed to be the next president of the United States, US Senator Lamar Alexander said in a statement on Friday.

"If there is any chance whatsoever that Joe Biden will be the next president, and it looks like he has a very good chance, the Trump administration should provide the Biden team with all transition materials, resources, and meetings necessary to ensure a smooth transition so that both sides are ready on day one," Alexander said.

Alexander, a senator from the US state of Tennessee, recalled that extensive recounting of vote totals and more than a month-long delay in confirming the results of the 2020 presidential election were not unprecedented and had occurred before in recent times.

"Recounting votes and resolving disputes after a close election is not unprecedented and should reassure Americans that election results are valid. Al Gore finally conceded 37 days after the 2000 election," Alexander said.

The prompt and orderly transfer or reaffirmation of immense power after a presidential election was the most enduring symbol of US democracy, Alexander added.



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**US State of Georgia Officially Certifies Biden Win in Presidential Vote - Secretary**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - The US state of Georgia has certified that presumptive President-elect Joe Biden was the official winner of its disputed presidential election, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger's office announced on Friday.

"The Georgia Secretary of State's Office today certified the results for the November 3, 2020 General Election," the statement said. "Certification does not preclude the state from continuing any current investigations related to the General Election or from pursuing any future allegations that may arise from these elections."

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**US House Democrats Say Trump Withheld Expiring Funds From WHO - Statement**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - The US House Committee on Oversight and Reform said in a press release on Friday that the Trump administration temporarily withheld expiring funds from the World Health Organization (WHO).

"Today, House Budget Chairman John Yarmuth, House Appropriations Chairwoman Nita M. Lowey, and House Oversight and Reform Chairwoman Carolyn B. Maloney published funding documents obtained from the Trump administration's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) that show the White House withheld expiring funds via an apportionment footnote - the same tactic used by President Trump to illegally withhold Ukraine security assistance," the release said.

The Oversight and Reform Committee said in the release the withholding of funds to the WHO was politically motivated and circumvented Congress. The funds were released seven days before the end of the fiscal year, the release added.

The WHO said it hopes projected President-elect Joe Biden will overturn President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from the organization.

Earlier this month, US media reported that Biden plans to sign a number of executive orders, including one on the reversal of the United States withdrawal from the WHO.

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**Trump Abuses Office, Intimidates Michigan Election Officials - Biden Campaign Adviser**

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - US President Donald Trump is abusing the power of office and intimidating election officials, Biden campaign adviser Bob Bauer said during a briefing on Friday with regard to Trump inviting Michigan state lawmakers to visit the White House.

Trump reportedly issued the invitation for the meeting to take place at the White House on Friday.

"Am I concerned about Donald Trump's conduct in calling legislative leaders to Washington? Of course. It's an abuse of office, it's an open attempt to intimidate election officials," Bauer said. However, Bauer said he is not concerned over the prospect of election results being overturned in Michigan, saying that the Michigan legislature cannot legally do what Trump is considering.

Bauer said Trump is working to have the Michigan legislators send the slate of electors to give him Michigan's electoral votes. Bauer also said that such a move is unprecedented, unconstitutional and, if successful, would be subject to a legal challenge.

The former White House counsel also said he believes Trump may delay vote certification in states across the United States but will be stymied by existing and immovable deadlines. Most major US news networks have projected Joe Biden to be the winner of the 20220 presidential election.

Trump has said he has won the election but alleged victory was stolen from him via massive election fraud and acts of impropriety. Trump has initiated audits and recounts in several states and has filed a number of lawsuits. Some states have said they did not find evidence of substantial election fraud.

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Biegun, Bosnia Presidency Members Discuss Western Balkans Stability - US State Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun has discussed with members of the presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina stability in the Western Balkans, a readout of the conversation said on Friday.

"Deputy Secretary Biegun and the members of the presidency also discussed cooperation to ensure peace and stability in the Western Balkans, which has been supported by more than \$2 billion in US assistance provided to Bosnia and Herzegovina since the Dayton Peace Accords," the readout said.

Biegun also called on the presidency members to fully realize the pledge of peace by enacting governance reforms needed for Euro-Atlantic integration, the readout said.

"He underscored that the United States deeply values its longstanding partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina; supports its sovereignty and territorial integrity; and continues to stand as a steadfast partner committed to our shared goal of a democratic, inclusive, and prosperous Bosnia and Herzegovina on the path to full Euro-Atlantic integration," the readout added.



In 1995, the United States brokered the Dayton Peace Accords that put an end to the three-year civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Under the terms of the agreement, Bosnia is comprised of two autonomous entities - Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina - governed by a collective presidency.

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US Carries Out Federal Execution of Orlando Hall – Justice Dept.

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) – The US federal government carried out a death sentence for a Texas man convicted of murder and kidnapping, its eight federal execution under President Donald Trump, the Justice Department said in a statement on Friday.

"Hall was executed at US Penitentiary Terre Haute in accordance with the capital sentence unanimously recommended by a federal jury and imposed by the US District Court for the Northern District of Texas in 1996," the statement said.

The prisoner was pronounced dead at 11:47 p.m. EST on Thursday, the statement added. Hall became the eighth inmate to be executed since federal executions resumed in July after a 17-year hiatus.

He was sentenced to death for kidnapping and murdering 16-year-old Lisa Rene in 1994 in the city of Arlington, Texas.

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US State of Georgia to Certify Election Results Despite 'Concerns' Over Vote - Official

WASHINGTON, November 20 (Sputnik) - The US state of Georgia will certify its presidential election results on Friday despite lingering concerns over the integrity of the vote, and will work to eliminate problems it uncovered during its statewide audit of ballots, Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger told reporters in Atlanta.

"I believe that the numbers that we have presented today are correct. The numbers reflect the verdict of the people, not a decision by the secretary of state's office, or of courts, or of either campaign," Raffensperger said. "I want to do everything that I can to build voters' trust in our electoral system. To that end I want to work with the governor and legislators on legislation that improves on our current system."

Raffensperger said he wanted to work on legislation that would allow the state to intervene in counties that have "systemic ongoing problems" in administering elections. He also pledged to implement a process that would prevent ballots from going uncounated.

"The audit revealed that in some counties not all the votes had been counted. That doesn't mean those counties had systemic problems, but it does raise a concern. We must implement a reconciliation process that prevents such errors from happening in the future," he said.

Raffensperger also called for reform of Georgia's mail-in voting system, which the state implemented for the first time this year in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

"Such a large number of mail-in ballots has raised concerns about election integrity," he said, vowing to work with legislators to enforce a photo ID requirement for all absentee voters.

Projected President-elect Joe Biden won Georgia by 0.3% - nearly 14,000 votes - in the initial tally of the November 3 election, a razor-thin margin that triggered the mandatory audit for the first time in the state's history.

Georgia is required to certify vote count by Friday at 5:00 p.m. local time, per state law.

All US states must have disputes resolved and votes certified by December 8 before electors meet in their respective capitals on December 18 to cast final official votes.